

Commercial news

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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Switzerland's foreign trade during the first quarter of the year.

During the first three months of this year, there was an increased deficit in the Swiss balance of trade, resulting from a rise in imports, which reached a new record figure. Imports went up by more than 30 p.c. in comparison with the corresponding period in 1956, whilst exports only went up by about 13 p.c. Because of this the Swiss trade deficit for the first quarter has more than doubled from one year to the next. The present high import figure has been passed, except in the first quarter of 1948, a year which was marked by an important re-organisation of stocks.

New Swiss economic co-ordination committee.

The co-ordination committee set up by the Swiss government to study the results of the present boom, will meet for the first time on the 9th of May. This committee will be of a consultative nature only, and will be concerned with all questions relating to the development of this boom, and the way in which it can be controlled. The committee will be made up of seven delegates and five deputies representing employers organisations. The workers will have the same number of representatives.

An interesting new Swiss device.

A Swiss factory making medical appliances has just put a new and interesting apparatus on the market, for reviving people who have been drowned, asphyxiated or electrocuted. It is intended especially for electrical factories, railways, shipping companies, life-saving societies, swimming pools, first aid posts, etc. The new apparatus, which can be taken apart, consists of a stretcher which has a see-saw movement. The apparatus is easy to handle and a patient who is put on it can be revived by a single person. It uses the technical and organic process of repeated movement, which helps the bringing up of water, assists breathing, and stimulates the blood circulation. This apparatus was designed and built as a result of researches carried out by a Swiss doctor, into the means of reviving people suffering from electric shock.

Swiss industry gets important orders from abroad.

The city of Hambourg has recently laid an order in Switzerland for an entire furnace of large capacity, for the incineration of house-hold garbage. This order represents the first stage in the modernisation of present equipment. It is of particular importance because the plant will be equipped with five incineration units in all. Other big cities in Germany, who have studied the problem of the destruction of garbage, are very interested in the incineration process. The process in question is marked by the fact that there is no smell at all, and this without the use of additional fuel. It also allows of the production of steam, which can be used for various purposes.

The United States Department of the Interior has given a firm in Zurich the order to build a generator for a Hydro-electric and irrigation scheme, on the Rogue River in the State of Oregon. It is to be noted that the lowest tender was not accepted.

Swiss industry and the development of other countries.

In Lisbon, the President of the Republic was present at the recent opening of the first section of a new electric railway line linking Lisbon, Sintra and Carregado. The Portuguese National Railway Company decided three years ago to electrify these two important lines carrying traffic between the suburbs and the Portuguese capital. A group of Swiss and foreign firms was to provide the necessary equipment for this electrification. Swiss industry, represented by three big firms, provided especially the rail-cars, transformers, electric motors, as well as the bogies for the new trains.

Important order to Swiss Industry.

An important British hydro-electric firm has just begun work on a vast reservoir, equipped with a pumping station. The order for the accumulating pumps for this station has been given to a well-known Swiss machine manufacturing company. The four pumps for the British plant will each have a maximum power of 110,000 H.P., and will weigh nearly 300 tons. They will be built partly in Switzerland, and partly in the British branch of the Swiss firm. The reservoir with the pumping station is the first of its kind in England. It is intended to cover the maximum electricity consumption during the day, whilst



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the excess energy produced at night will feed the pumps filling the reservoir. It is interesting to note that Swiss Industry has been called upon to collaborate in this original solution, which allows of the balancing of consumption and production of electrical energy.

The consumption of aluminium in Switzerland.

In 1956, 86% of Swiss production of crude aluminium was used up in the country itself. This represents over 15 lbs. per head of population. These figures put Switzerland immediately after the United States, which tops all other countries in the world in aluminium consumption. The best client for aluminium in Switzerland is the building industry, followed by the packing industry, and the industry for the construction of machines and apparatus.

Television in Switzerland.

Although Swiss television has not yet got a finalised statute, and it is still in the experimental stage, it is developing steadily. At the end of April, 1957, there were more than 25,000 television licences in Switzerland, of which nearly 4,000 were for public establishments. The largest number of viewers is in Zurich, which has a quarter of the Swiss total. Ticino also has a large number because Italian television can be received as well.

The trans-atlantic line of Swissair.

The beginning of May marked the tenth anniversary of the setting up of the first regular air service between Switzerland and the United States, by Swissair. In the last ten years the company has made more than 3,600 flights between the two countries, carrying about 112,000 passengers over a total distance of 25 million Km. The line between Switzerland and the United States is today one of the most important of the Swissair network, and, as of now, the national airline company will have ten transatlantic crossings per week. Especially, there will be two direct non-stop flights, and two flights using the new "sun route" which has a stop at Lisbon.

International company borrows money in Switzerland.

Already two years ago several European railway companies decided to form an international company, with a capital of fifty million Swiss francs. This international company, known as "Eurofima", which has its offices in Bale, is floating a loan of 30 million

Swiss francs, at a rate of interest of 4½%, which will allow it partially to finance the construction of about 2,000 goods wagons of unified pattern. These trucks will be rented to six European companies, including the Swiss Federal Railways, at rates which will cover the payment of the interest percentage, and the working off of the debt. "Eurofima", which will group together fourteen European networks, hopes that by unifying the type of goods wagons, and buying them all together, it will be able to rationalise goods transport in Europe.

Economic negotiations between Spain and Switzerland.

Spanish and Swiss negotiators recently met in Madrid, with the aim of assuring that trade and payments, which have been developing favourably during the last few years, be maintained at the same level. An understanding was reached on this matter, and trade between the two countries will continue in accordance with the agreement signed in 1954. Both countries fixed additional quotas for certain goods entering both Switzerland and Spain; in addition the export of Swiss watches to Spain will remain free.

The Swiss labour market.

The seasonal re-starting of outside work was intensified during March 1957, and once again the Swiss labour market has very much reduced the number of people on its books. At the end of March there were only 1,000 people out of work in the whole of Switzerland, which is three times less than at the end of the previous month. This reduction in the number of people out of work extends to nearly all different trades, but it is most notable in the building industry. On the other hand, the demand for manual labour has noticeably gone up, and the number of jobs open rose to nearly 8,000 at the end of March. There is every reason to believe that the shortage of manual labour during the summer of this year will be even more acute than in previous years.

Switzerland's watch exports during the first quarter of this year.

The Swiss watchmaking industry is not just sitting back after the record sales figures shown in 1956. During the first three months of this year the industry has managed to increase its sales still further. Statistics recently published show that the exports of the watch industry rose to 280 million francs, which is almost a fifth of total Swiss exports.

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